

Anthem

By Ayn Rand

(1905-1982)



Ayn Rand

- She was born in St. Petersburg, Russia, on February 2, 1905.
- She opposed the mysticism and collectivism of Russian culture.
- She witnessed both the Kerensky and Bolshevik Revolutions during her teenage years in Russia.
- The communist victory in Russia resulted in the confiscation of her father's pharmacy and periods of near-starvation for her family.
- When introduced to American history in her last year of high school, she immediately took America as her model of what a nation of free men could be.
- In late 1925 she obtained permission to leave Soviet Russia for a visit to relatives in the United States.
- Although she told Soviet authorities that her visit would be short, she was determined never to return to Russia, and she never did.





Key Facts

- **type of work** · Novella
 - **genre** · Anti-Utopian (The world presented is the world as it should NOT be.)
 - **time and place written** · The United States, 1937
 - **narrator** · Equality 7-2521 writes the journal of the events as they transpire over the course of several months.
 - **point of view** · Equality 7-2521 speaks in the first person (plural) He will refer to himself as “we” instead of “I.”
 - **tone** · Equality 7-2521 records his thoughts and actions in a straightforward manner, with no trace of irony.
 - **tense** · Present, with some past-tense narration
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Key Facts

- **setting** (time) · Sometime in the distant future, after the collapse of the social order because of the common acceptance of collectivist values
- **setting** (place) · An unidentified city; much of the first half of *Anthem* is narrated from a tunnel underground where Equality 7-2521 is hiding, and the second half is narrated from a forest where he has taken refuge from a society that hates him.
- **protagonist** · Equality 7-2521
- **symbols** · Light; the forest; manuscripts

Key Literary Terms



Theme:

The central or dominant idea behind the story; the most important aspect that emerges from how the book treats the subject



Point of View:

The position or vantage point from which the events of a story seem to come and are presented to the reader



Setting:

When and where the short story, play, or novel takes place



Narrator:

The one who tells the story



Motif:

A recurrent device, formula, or situation that often serves as a signal for the appearance of a character or event

Collectivism vs. Individualism

- Collectivism – the subjugation of the individual to the group – whether to a race, class, or state does not matter. In *Anthem*, Ayn Rand will present a collectivist society that is stagnant and primitive, and the word "I" is obsolete.

The individual . . .

- 💡 is owned by the group
 - 💡 has no right to a private existence
 - 💡 has no right to lead his own life, pursue his own happiness, or use his own property
 - 💡 exists only as part of the group
-

Collectivism vs. Individualism

- Individualism/Objectivism – regards every man as an independent, sovereign entity who possesses an inalienable right to his own life, a right derived from his nature as a rational being. Individualism does not mean that one can do whatever he feels like doing; it means that every man or woman is an individual and has the same rights.

The individual . . .

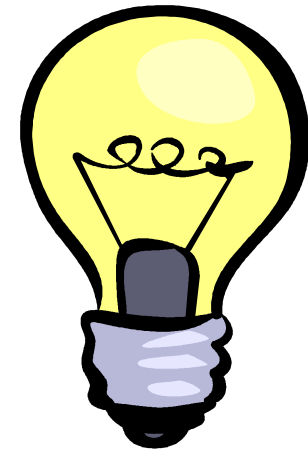
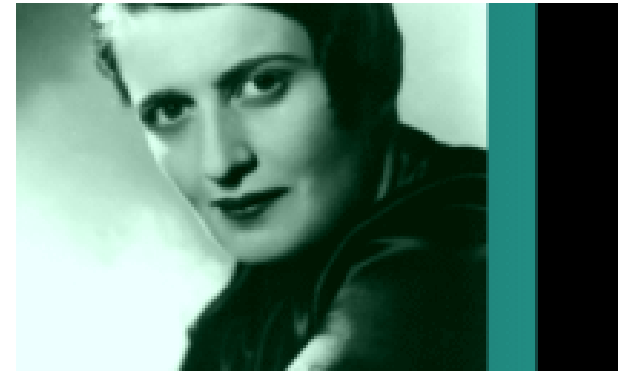
- 💡 has rights
- 💡 will not run anyone else's life, nor let anyone run theirs
- 💡 will not rule or be ruled
- 💡 will not be a master nor a slave
- 💡 will not sacrifice themselves to anyone, nor sacrifice anyone to themselves

Selflessness

- *Anthem* dramatizes the view that the self is destroyed in a collectivist society.
- Selflessness is shown in the following ways:
 - No one has a personal name because under collectivism, individuals are interchangeable.
 - To prefer one person over another (as a friend or romantic partner) is committing the cardinal sin known as the “Transgression of Preference.”
 - It is wrong to disagree, to have independent thoughts, or to ask questions because these things will set you apart from others.
 - Self-assertion is forbidden.
 - All decisions are made by the “Council” in the name of the whole.
 - Individuals have no rights.
 - Everything which is not permitted by the law is forbidden.

Selflessness (cont'd)

- *Anthem* depicts what happens to a society that implements selflessness. The result is what Ayn Rand believes is a subhuman society; what makes human beings human is having a self, which means having a mind.
- A selfless individual is a mindless individual.
- To practice selflessness, one must abstain from thinking and obey one's masters. One must merge himself into the group and obliterate the individual identity. The result is a society of mindless robots as found in *Anthem*.



Free Will

- When people have free will, they can make choices, make up their own mind, makes decisions, and can direct their own lives by the ideas and values they adopt.
 - In *Anthem* all the characters actually have free will, although most will believe that they do not. It appears that all the individuals are brainwashed, with no power to control their own lives.
 - Even the so-called “robots” who submit to the authorities have free will; they are robots by choice – they were not forced to obey. They do so voluntarily.
 - The characters in *Anthem* are depressed, without hope or ambition. They make no effort to accomplish anything and merely go along with orders.
 - Ayn Rand holds that free will means “the choice to think or not.” Most of the characters have chosen not to think.
 - The main character in *Anthem* will rely on his own judgment rather than to take the beliefs of his leaders as automatically true. Therefore, free will is exercised.
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Motifs

- A motif is a recurrent device, formula, or situation that often serves as a signal for the appearance of a character or event. The following motifs are present in *Anthem*.
 - The use of darkness and light
 - The presence of ignorance and knowledge
 - The idea of transgression and damnation
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Motifs (cont'd)

■ Fear

- Fear in *Anthem* characterizes those social lepers who do not have enough sense of themselves to understand that each individual is the center of his or her universe.

■ Naming

- In the society in *Anthem*, naming is a form of identifying one's possessions as one's own. For this reason, Equality 7-2521 names the Golden One on two separate occasions, names himself, and searches relentlessly for the word "I."

■ Shapelessness

- Like fear, shapelessness in *Anthem* connotes evil because it illustrates a lack of willingness or ability to believe in something and to stand behind it.
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Places of Importance

- Home of Infants
 - Home of Students
 - Palace of Mating
 - Home of Street Sweepers, Scholars, Leaders . . .
 - Home of Peasants
 - Home of the Useless
 - Palace of Corrective Detention
 - City Cesspool
 - City Theater
 - Uncharted Forest
-

Key Characters & Organizations

- Equality 7-2521 > The Unconquered > Prometheus
 - Liberty 5-3000 > The Golden One > Gaea
 - Fraternity 2-5503
 - International 4-8818
 - Solidarity 9-6347
 - Union 5-3992
 - The Transgressor of the Unspeakable Word
 - The Saint of the Pyre
 - Key Organizations:
 - Council of Eugenics
 - Council of Vocations
 - World Council of Scholars
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Equality 7-2521's New Name

- Equality 7-2521
 - The Unconquered
 - Prometheus
 - In Greek mythology, Prometheus surpassed all in cunning and deceit. He held no awe for the gods, and he ridiculed Zeus. Prometheus was the creator of man. He stole fire from heaven and gave it to his human creations.



Liberty 5-3000's New Name

■ Liberty 5-3000

□ The Golden One

■ Gaea

- In Greek mythology, Gaea is known as Earth or Mother Earth. She is considered the primeval divinity of earth, one of the primal elements who first emerged at the dawn of creation, along with air, sea, and sky. She was the great mother of all.



The Ayn Rand Institute (ARI)

- The Ayn Rand Institute (ARI) is a nonprofit organization that works to introduce young people to Ayn Rand's novels, to support scholarship and research based on her ideas, and to promote the principles of reason, rational self-interest, individual rights and laissez-faire capitalism to the widest possible audience.
 - The major ARI objective is to cultivate a generation of intellectuals who will be effective advocates for the fundamentals of reason, rational self-interest, individual rights and capitalism. These professionals will be capable of articulating those ideas, at the highest level, to peers and students through publishing and teaching.
 - The ARI gives free copies of Ayn Rand's novels to teachers and classrooms all over the world.
 - The ARI also gives out thousands of dollars each year through its essay contests.
 - <http://www.aynrand.org>
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